



Digital Reference Services In Skuast-K, Kashmir University And Islamic University In Kashmir: A Case Study

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Abstract:-

The digital reference service refers to the task of providing assistance to the library users in fulfilling their various information needs. The digital reference services have become an important part and parcel of the library services in the changing technological environment. This paper discusses the various models of providing digital reference services in academic libraries including email, Ask A services, online chat reference, video conferencing, digital robots, and collaborative digital reference. This paper highlights the present status of Digital reference service in the three University libraries and discusses the strength and weakness of existing reference service being provided in the libraries under study..

Keywords:-Digital Reference services, Reference Service, SKUAST-K, Kashmir University, Islamic University, J&K UT

Introduction

At one time libraries were considered as storehouse and books were meant for preservation. The librarian was supposed to be the custodian who did not encourage the use of books. As such libraries acted to be passive and archival institutions. A modern library is regarded as a service institution its aim is to enable the users to make the most effective use of resources and service of the library. The modern libraries are expected to convert potential user into habitual user. The library retrieval tools cannot satisfy the requirements of users so for their search /guidance capacity is concerned. This is achieved through a well established mechanism of human intervention. Whereas a right contact is ensued between a user and a document.

Reference service came into being only when personal assistance began to be considered a basic function of the library and provided in the form of not an ad hoc but a deliberate programme. According to Rothstein in USA the very notion of reference service goes back to 1875, but in countries like India the concept developed much later. The essence of Ranganathan's five laws of library science was that books are for use and user is the prime factor his time must be saved. This shows clear concept of reference service. Ranganathan was the pioneer in putting reference service into practice in India by 1930.

Definition:-According to Ranganathan right contact between the reader and right book at the right time and in right personal way. Convert the users into habitual user. He named this method as reference service

According to Margaret Hutchins Reference work included the direct personal aid within a library to person in search of information for whatever purpose and also various library activities especially aimed at making information easily available as possible.

Digital reference (more commonly called **virtual reference**) is a service by which a library reference service is conducted online, and the reference transaction is a computer-mediated communication. It is the remote, computer-mediated delivery of reference information provided by library professionals to users who cannot access or do not want face-to-face communication. Virtual reference service is most often an extension of a library's existing reference service program. The word "reference" in this context refers to the task of providing assistance to library users in finding information, answering questions, and otherwise fulfilling users' information needs. Reference work often but not always involves using reference works, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc. This form of reference work expands reference services from the physical reference desk to a "virtual" reference desk where the patron could be writing from home, work or a variety of other locations.

Digital Library:

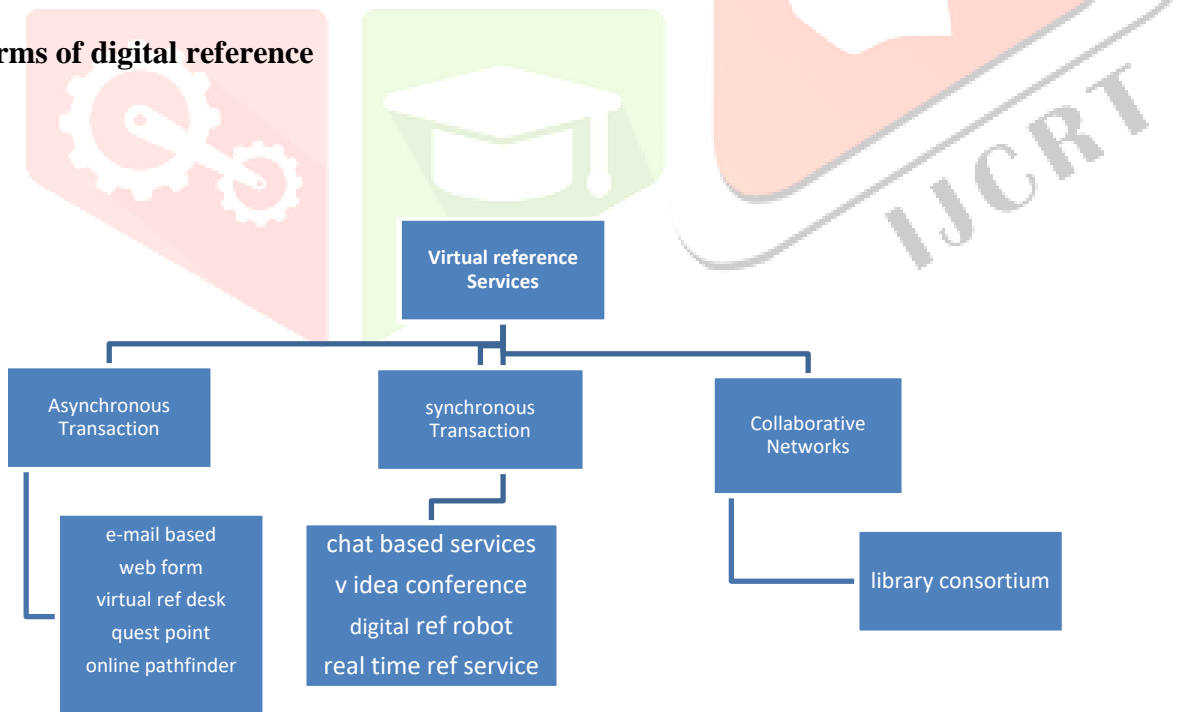
According to Lesk (1997) "Digital libraries are organized collections of digital information. They combine the structuring and gathering of information, which libraries and archives have always done, with the digital representation that computers have made possible." According to Digital Libraries Federation (DLF) (1999) "Digital libraries are organizations that provide the resources, including the specialized staff, to select, structure, offer intellectual access to, interpret, distribute, preserve the integrity of, and ensure the persistence over time of collections of digital works so that they are readily and economically available for use by a defined community or set of communities." According to - William Arms "An informal definition of a digital library is a managed collection of information, with associated services, where the information is stored in digital formats and accessible over a network. A crucial part of this definition is that the information is managed. A stream of data sent to earth from a satellite is not a library. The same data, when organized systematically, becomes a digital library collection." According to Gladney H.M, et. al. (1994) "A digital library service is an assemblage of digital computing, storage, and communications machinery together with the software needed to reproduce, emulate, and extend the

services provided by conventional libraries based on paper and other material means of collecting, storing, cataloguing, finding, and disseminating information.”

Digital reference Services

The terms "virtual reference," "digital reference," "e-reference," Internet information services," "live reference" and "real-time reference" are used interchangeably to describe reference services that utilize computer technology in some way. Digital reference (or virtual reference) service is a service by which a library reference service is provided online and the reference transaction is a computer-mediated communication between the user and the librarian. **(Digital reference, 2018)** Digital Reference is a service that provides users with answers to questions in a computer mediated environment. Digital reference refers to a network of expertise, intermediation and resources put at the disposal of a person seeking answers in an online environment. Digital Reference Services are Internet based services that employ human experts or intermediaries to provide information to users. The terms” electronic reference” and virtual reference are often used synonymously with “digital reference”, although virtual reference limitless by distance and physical space. In other context it is the “Contact between the right user and right information at the right time and in right personal way through electronic media”. Virtual Reference work includes the direct personal aid within a virtual library to persons in search of information for whatever purpose & especially designed for making information as easily available as possible to users.

Forms of digital reference



Virtual reference Services

Data Analysis:-in the present study the structure Questionnaire was selected as the source for collection the comprehensive & relevant data. The data is analysed in view to the objectives mentioned in the study as follow

Table 1:-Age group of the respondents

SNo.	Name of Institution	Respondent Librarians	Age group of the respondents				
			Below 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	45- 55	And 56 Above
1.	SKUAST-K	4			1(11.11%)	3(33.33%)	
2.	Kashmir University	3				3(33.33%)	
3.	Islamic University, kashmir	2				2(22.22%)	
4.	Total	9			1(11.11%)	8(88.88%)	

In table 1, the majority of age group in between 45-55 (66.66%) of librarians in SKUAST-K and Kashmir University Libraries and between 36-45 age group 1 (11.11%)of librarian in SKUAST-K.

Table 2:-Analysis of Reference Services Provided by SKUAST-K, Kashmir University and Islamic University

S No	Name of institution	Bib Comp	Ref Desk	Lib Tour	CAS	SDI	ILL DDs	Index & Abstract	Exhibition	RAS Ref	lib Bro	Users Education
1.	Central Library ,Skuastk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
2.	FoF,Skuastk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
3.	FoFy,Skuastk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
4.	FvSc,Skuastk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
5.	Kashmir University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
6.	College of Engineering,KU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
7.	Business School,KU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
8.	Islamin University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

Table 2 represents that, 08 (100%) of libraries provides Reference Desk, Library Tour, AS and Inter library loan/ Document delivery services, SDI and User Education to its users. 5 (62.50%) of libraries providing Exhibition to its users, while as 4(50%)of libraries provides Referral service. None of libraries Preparation of library brochures

Table 3:-Type of Reference Services provided by SKUAST-K, Kashmir University, Islamic University

SNo	✓ Name of Institution	In person		Remote		Electronic	
		Face to face	telephonic	e-mail	letter	Real time chat	Web form
1.	Central Library	✓	✓	✓	✓		
2.	FoF,Skuastk	✓	✓	✓	✓		
3.	FoFy,Skuastk	✓	✓	✓			
4.	FvSc,Skuastk	✓	✓	✓	✓		
5.	Kashmir University	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
6.	College of Engineering,KU	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
7.	Business School,KU	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
8.	Islamin University	✓	✓	✓			

The table 3 reveals that, 08 (100%) of libraries provide Face-to-face reference service, Telephone, E-mail service. 06 (75%) of libraries provide Letter for service, 03 (37.50%) of libraries provide web form reference service to its users and

Table 4:-Types of Virtual Reference Services by SKUAST-K, Kashmir University, and Islamic University

SNo	Name of Institution	E mail refence	Web format	Ask to Librarian	VRD	Online chat	Digital ref Robert	Video confer	Collaborative digital ref	Real time ref	Online path finder
1.	Central Library	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓
2.	FoF,Skuastk	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓
3.	FoFy,Skuastk	✓		✓							✓
4.	FvSc,Skuastk	✓		✓							✓
5.	Kashmir University	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓
6.	College of Engineering,KU	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓
7.	Business School,KU	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
8.	Islamin University	✓		✓							

Table 4:- highlighted that, 08 (100%) of libraries providing E-mail reference service, Ask to librarian and online pathfinder in all libraries 03 (37.50%) of libraries providing VRD and video conference 2 (25%) of libraries provides collaborative digital reference and real time reference services to users of libraries.

Table 5:-Using Web to answer Reference Question by SKUASTK Kashmir University and Islamic university

Sno	Name of Institution	No of respondents	Frequency of using web to answer ref question					
			Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	never	No resp
1.	SKUAST-K	04	01	03				
2.	Kashmir University	03	01	02				
3.	Islamic University	01		01				
4.	Total		02	06				

The Table 5 represents that, the use of web to answer reference questions there are 6 (75%) of libraries Weekly use of web to answer reference questions. 02 (25%) of libraries Daily .

FINDINGS

- Most of the respondent's librarians age in between 46-55.
- 100% of SKUAST-K, Kashmir University and Islamic University libraries provides Library Tour, Current Awareness Service (CAS) ,SDI and Inter library loan/ Document delivery services to its users other than other services of the library likes Reference desk, and User education and Book exhibition/ display service. Most of Kashmir University and Islamic University Exhibition and RAS services to users.
- Reference service provided by SKUAST-K, Kashmir University and Islamic is in personal form.
- It is found that highest 08 (100%) of libraries providing E-mail reference service, ask to librarian and online finder to users of libraries.
- 4 (100%) of SKUASTK, Kashmir University and Islamic University libraries that provides of e-mail reference service.
- It is observed that the highest 06 (75%) of all libraries that weekly use web to answer reference question followed by 2(25%) of skuast-k and Kashmir University daily using web to answer reference questions.

CONCLUSIONS. Digital reference services form a backbone of the information services in the libraries. They have transformed the entire skeleton of the reference services. The digital reference service has proved to be an efficient information service in the present digital era serving the users to their expectations. A good number of reference sources i.e.

encyclopaedias, dictionaries, thesauri, handbooks, directories and major abstracting services like Chemical Abstracts, Biological Abstracts etc. are available on the internet. Thus, in the future users will be more dependent on the online sources and services. They will tap the required information at home by means of computer. At the same time the cost involved will be affordable for the users and will continue to get the information at the less cost from the library. There will be a great demand for accurate and specific information. So, expert reference librarians will be needed in the future. As no library can provide reference service through its own collection there will be a need to have collaborative ventures for reference service. The future of reference service will be based on digital collections and communication links through web. Whatever shapes the new technology is going to take in the future Given that the digital library field is still quite new, it seems strange to be talking already about enhancing digital libraries. However, in this fast-moving environment, the initial digital libraries resulting from digitization projects, or even virtual collections, are being enhanced as user expectations and technology capabilities allow. In the midst of this furious activity, it is valuable to analyze users' needs and interests and then to identify Knowledge Organization System that can be used to enhance the digital library. By going beyond the initial organization of the digital library, Digital librarians can use the network environment to provide additional value to its users.

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